

Original Article

The Effectiveness of Group Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy on General Self-Efficacy, Self-Control, and Internet Addiction Prevalence among Medical University Students

Abstract

Introduction: Various studies have highlighted the high prevalence of psychological and psychiatric problems among students with Internet addiction (IA). This study aimed to determine the effect of GCBT on self-control, self-efficacy as well as the prevalence of IA amongst students of Qazvin University of Medical Sciences (QUMS). **Methods:** This randomized controlled trial was performed on 80 students addicted to the Internet. Participants were randomly divided into control (without intervention) and treatment group (GCBT). The experimental group participated in a GCBT program consisted of 10 two-hour sessions based on psychosocial training, cognitive reconstruction, behavior modification, and improving emotion regulation. Data were collected using demographic information, Yang IA test, brief self-control scale, and compulsive Internet usage scale before and 3 months after GCBT. **Results:** The findings demonstrated significant improvements in general self-efficacy (21.90 ± 5.1 – 27.31 ± 3.9 , $F = 46.131$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.001$) and self-control (33.03 ± 4.7 – 44.78 ± 6.1 , $F = 59.252$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.001$), while compulsive Internet usage (41.41 ± 6.35 – 25.13 ± 3.97 , $F = 163.359$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.001$) and IA (60.83 ± 9.95 – 36.10 ± 5.16 , $F = 183.302$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.001$) were remarkably reduced in the experimental group after GCBT. **Conclusion:** This study suggests that GCBT can be an effective treatment for those college students struggling with IA, with improving the psychological variables affecting IA.

Keywords: Cognitive-behavior therapy, gambling disorder, internet addiction, self-control, self-efficacy

Introduction

Research has displayed that the number of Internet users is currently more than 3 billion people worldwide, which is a remarkable increase compared to 360 million Internet users in 2000. Moreover, the number of such users in Iran is estimated to be around 46 million, which accounts for 57.2% of all the Middle East users. In addition, the Internet penetration rate with the growth of 80% has raised in Iran from 11.7% in 2006 to 16.1% in 2018.^[1]

The Internet application as the basis of planning and development in cultural, social, economic, and scientific programs in the present age is irrefutable. Despite the potential benefits, excessive and uncontrolled usage of the Internet can lead to numerous problems such as exposure to inappropriate images and content, lack of privacy, addictive behaviors, and ultimately Internet addiction (IA).^[2]

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In fact, IA is a type of impulse control disorder associated with immoderate and unrestrained utilization of the Internet to the extent that could dominate the rest of one's social activities and would result in performance decline in occupational, social, family, economic, and psychological domains. Furthermore, from the perspective of classical psychology and psychiatric, IA is a relatively new phenomenon, and literatures use a variety of terms to name it, including "compulsory internet use," "problematic internet use," "pathologic internet use," and "internet addiction."^[3] In general, the consequences of IA include weakness in emotional and social skills, loneliness, depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, sleep disturbance, impaired physical activity, decreased family relationships, neglect of social duties, lack of work efficiency, and academic performance decline.^[4]

As a pandemic in the 21st century, the prevalence of IA varies from 0.3% in the

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